

Administrator's Update for 9/28/11

By Ray Sandrock, County Administrator

At the first budget public hearing earlier this month, the commissioners tentatively approved the budget for the 2011-2012 fiscal year. All millage rates remain the same as the previous year except for those that support Law Enforcement and Jail operations which will see a small increase of about 0.4 mills. Overall, most property owners should still experience a lower tax bill, due to devaluations. The commissioners will vote on the final budget at the budget public hearing tomorrow, September 29, at 5:01 p.m. in the County Administration Center, 18500 Murdock Circle, Room #119, Port Charlotte.

Road Projects

The Piper Road Widening South project was designed to provide a four-lane, divided arterial road, connecting Henry Street with Jones Loop Road at I-75. It also included the installation of an extensive stormwater system, as well as a new water and sewer main. The project is 97 percent complete, and the contractor is working on punch list items. Engineering is still working to resolve some issues with FDOT on the southerly end of the project. The County recently did a change order extending the project by 22 days, but the FDOT issues may push the completion date out further.

The purpose of the Placida Road Widening Sales Tax project is to enhance the corridor for a hurricane evacuation route. The project proposes to widen Placida Road from two lanes to a four-lane divided roadway, from Rotonda Boulevard West to Cape Haze Drive, and will include curb and gutter, four-foot paved shoulders, and six-foot sidewalks on both sides. The plans are complete and ready to be used to bid the project for construction. The County is close to finalizing the list of right-of-way that will need to be acquired.

Community Garden Progress

The staff at South County Regional Park and members of TEAM Punta Gorda have finished the installation of the 21 garden beds at the Community Garden. This process included installing the beds in the ground and filling all of them with dirt. Staff will be moving forward with the next step, the irrigation process. The garden is located at the South County Regional Park, 670 Cooper Street, Punta Gorda. Gardeners will be able to plant most varieties of their choice of fruits, vegetables and plants or flowers. Applications for plots will be accepted starting October 3 and plots will be ready for planting in early November. The cost is \$20 for the year for a 4' x 20' plot or \$10 for a 4' x 10' plot, on a first-come first-served basis. For further information call South County Regional Park at 941.505.8686.

Englewood Charlotte Library Expansion

There will be a public meeting at the Englewood Charlotte Library on October 5 from 5 to 6 p.m. to introduce the library expansion plans and the archive plans. All are welcome to this open house, to come and see the plans and speak with the members of the planning team.

ROMA Training

Our family services division staff and the Community Action Agency Advisory Board was provided with Results Oriented Management and Accountability (ROMA) training from Fred Richmond from the Center for Applied Management Principles. Mr. Richmond, the foremost expert on ROMA, was traveling through the area on other business, which enabled us to utilize his services for a fraction of the normal cost. This training was a requirement under our Community Services Block Grant.

Teaching Teens

Community Development staff presented a planning workshop to a class of 6th graders from Port Charlotte Middle School studying the “7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens.” The students participated in a discussion about human settlement, learned about the history of land use planning and the different types of planning and participated in a hands-on Lego exercise where they provided ideas for the redevelopment of Parkside and the south end of Manasota Key. These students are studying leadership skills and the workshop provided them an opportunity to experience the leadership roles that citizens play in helping to plan their communities. All of the activities were related to educational benchmarks required by the State of Florida, integrating easily into the middle school curriculum requirements.